

Great Ships of the Seas: *The Stavangerfjord*

The *Stavangerfjord*, a Norwegian Ammerican Line's ship, had been built at the Cammell Laird yard at Birkenhead, near Liverpool, in 1918, just as World War I was nearing an end. However, there was a last minute concern about the ship's safety and accordingly she was moved to New York.



Not having previously visited home waters, she is the only European liner to have had an *eastbound* maiden voyage, from New York to her home port. She continued in Atlantic service without interruption until December 1939.

With the outbreak of World War II, she was at first laid up at Oslo for safety, but she fell into enemy hands soon after the Nazi invasion and was used as a troop depot ship. She did not sail during the war and only needed a fresh coat of paint and some cleaning before she was ready to resume service.

The *Stavangerfjord* was one of those dependable, sturdy ships that had a loyal national following and worked the Atlantic year after year. Even the loss of her rudder during an Atlantic storm in December 1953 delayed her arrival by only a few days. Her crew worked in teams with such determination to navigate the ship that they reached home in time for Christmas. In all, some 14,000 messages passed between bridge and engine room to guide the rudderless liner.

Although the *Stavangerfjord* was to have been retired and replaced by the *Bergensfjord* in 1956, her strong appeal to Norwegian passengers earned her a few more years on the seas. She was finally withdrawn in December 1963, at the age of forty-five, just at the right time for a final Christmas sailing to Norway.

There were moves to preserve her as a hotel, museum, or moored training ship, but the highest bid came from Hong Kong scrappers. She completed her last and longest voyage in February 1965, sailing into History as yet another great ship of the world's seagoing past.

